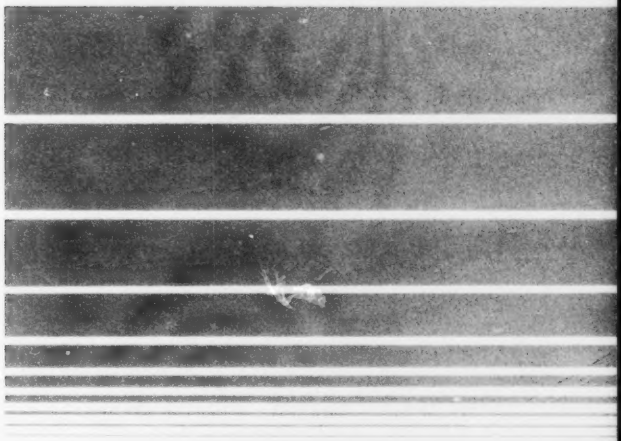
Final Report by the Joint Committee on Municipal Recreation in Nova Scotia



FINAL REPORT

Municipal Recreation in Nova Scotia

A report submitted to
The Minister of Culture,
Recreation and Fitness
September 1985
by
The Joint Committee
on Municipal Recreation

Jerome Morgan
Wendell Phinney
Abbie Neville
Sherman Zwicker

Dick Hayden
David McNamara
Nelson Ellsworth

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INTRODUCTION

In September of 1984 The Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness invited the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) to select representatives and participate in a joint committee with Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness representatives. The purpose of the committee was to examine the development of municipal recreation in Nova Scotia up to the present time and make recommendations to the Minister for future development.

The Union named Mayor Wendell Phinney, Town of Kentville; Jerome Morgan, Councillor, Municipality of Chester; Alderman Abbie Neville, City of Sydney; and Sherman Zwicker, Executive Director UNSM to participate on the committee along with David McNamara, Director of Sport and Community Services; Nelson Ellsworth, Regional Representative-Central; and Dick Hayden, Coordinator of Municipal and Special Recreation Services from the Department.

This committee met a number of times over twelve months, developed a process for gathering information, compiled the information and produced the following report. The basis for the report was drawn from briefs submitted by forty-nine municipal units, a staff paper prepared by the Department and the experience of committee members.

It is the hope of the committee that this report will be used as a basis for future direction by the government of Nova Scotia and that municipalities and the Department will continue to work together in the provision of more effective recreation services and opportunities for Nova Scotians.

The committee wishes to thank the Minister for this opportunity.

MUNICIPAL RECREATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

In 1973, the Province of Nova Scotia established a Department of Recreation. One of its fundamental principles was and remains that municipal units are the primary agents for the delivery of recreation services to the people of Nova Scotia. This principle resulted in the establishment of a cost-sharing formula which was designed to assist with the provision of recreation programs and services, to assist in hiring professional leadership and implement programs. Participation in the program required that the municipality have a

commission or committee, established by by-law or an act of the legislature, that would advise the municipal council on its involvement in recreation.

The Municipal Recreation Assistance Program has been well accepted by municipalities and throughout the ensuing ten years has resulted in all 66 units establishing recreation advisory commissions or committees providing budgets for recreation services and programs. During this time, the number of municipal units employing one or more full-time recreation professionals to administer programs and services has grown from seven to fifty-six.

The view that the municipality should be the prime agent for the delivery of programs and services in the public recreation sector was further reinforced when the provincial Ministers Responsible for Recreation agreed in 1983 on a policy statement that highlighted that role. The policy statement reinforced the position that provincial government assistance to communities and their organizations would include the provision of financial and technical support channeled through municipal recreation authorities and departments.

The following, taken from "An Interprovincial Recreation Statement" by Provincial Ministers Responsible for Recreation and Sport, October 1983, serves as a basis to describe the relationship between the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness and its municipal clients.

> "It is recognized that individuals should freely identify and pursue recreation activities of their choice. As far as possible, opportunities for participation should be initially developed and managed by individuals or groups of individuals independent of Government involvement. Where additional resources are required and economies can be gained from collective action, community scale resources and organizations should be cooperatively developed or utilized to meet recreation needs.
>
> "Municipal Governments are closest to the people; they are likely to respond more flexibly, more quickly and more effectively to the needs of the community in matters of recreation. For this reason, the municipality is the primary public supplier of direct recreation services."

Early in this committee's life, municipal units were encouraged to articulate their comments on the present state of municipal recreation as well as future plans and needs. The results of this survey have provided invaluable guidance to the committee.

It is clear from the survey that there is near unanimous agreement in the eyes of municipalities with regard to their commitment to providing recreation programs and services in future years. Many respondents suggested that they were committed to the provision of recreation programs and services providing the Province continues to fund the field. Municipalities are committed to providing recreation opportunities due mainly to the benefits offered to lifestyle and improvement of the quality of life within the municipality.

Across the board municipalities stressed the immeasurable value of the volunteer in the success of community recreation. Without the commitment and dedication of thousands of volunteers who devote their personal time to recreation activities, many services and programs would be too difficult and expensive to implement. Though free, the contribution of volunteers is also invaluable.

Based on responses from municipalities and the committee's own deliberations over the past twelve months, the committee recommends the following goal and objectives for the Department over the next 5 to 10 year period. Each objective is supported by specific activities, necessary to the achievement of each.

GOAL

Recognizing that the provision of recreation programs and services to the citizens of Nova Scotia is the prerogative of the municipal units, the Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness should provide fiscal and human resources as recommended below so that the quality of life at the community level may be enhanced.

The committee believes that this goal can be achieved through a productive partnership where the following commitments have been made by both Province and municipalities:

1. Planning, review and evaluation at all levels of recreation;

2. Leadership development, professional and volunteer, at all levels;
3. Regional cooperation and regional initiatives;
4. Continuous communication and information sharing;
5. Properly planned and equitably shared use of existing recreation facilities and similar negotiation with new construction regardless of political boundary.

The committee has attempted to be as specific as possible in its recommendations and respectfully suggests that the Minister assign priorities. Such priorities should take into consideration the following:

- those items that imply long-term economies;
- those items that are inexpensive;
- those items that will openly demonstrate to the various publics a commitment to improved recreation services;
- those items that encourage local initiative.

Many of these recommendations depend on the ability of the Province to provide additional funding and on the characteristic role of the Province as an ongoing provider of funds on a regular basis. We have stressed the need for municipal input into provincial decision-making and particularly into the distribution of funds for recreation across the province.

Therefore, we recommend to the Minister that he invite the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities to join in a standing joint committee on recreation which will annually review and advise him on municipal recreation in general and the implementation of this report in particular.

In addition, taking note of "An Interprovincial Recreation Statement" and its emphasis on economies gained from collective action and cooperative development, we urge the Minister to consider this dimension in his support for new programs and facilities and have so indicated below.

Keeping these comments in mind, the implementation of the following objectives will strengthen the Department's existing positive relationship with municipal units and enable recreation to continue its steady improvement in Nova Scotia over the next 5 to 10 years.

OBJECTIVE NO. 1 — MASTER PLANS

To encourage the planning process at all levels of recreation by development of master plans for the province, region and municipalities.

Methods

(a) development of a process and a model for a recreation plan;
(b) organization of workshops and seminars to explain and discuss the model;
(c) provision of staff consultation with municipalities re their role and the need for a recreation plan;
(d) provision of financial assistance to develop a plan;
(e) encouragement of municipal and regional planning by developing a policy of funding and services based on the existence of a recreation master plan.

OBJECTIVE NO. 2 — LOCAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

To assist municipalities to initiate, develop and expand recreation programs and services.

Methods

(a) provision of increased financial assistance under the Municipal Assistance Program to ensure a minimum level of programs and services;
(b) provision of financial assistance on a project basis to increase the programs and level of assistance;
(c) provision of incentives for experimental program designs;
(d) provision of a streamlined application process;
(e) identification, research and communication of new and innovative program trends.

OBJECTIVE NO. 3 — PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

To assist in developing professional leadership at the municipal level through the regional offices.

Methods

(a) provision of financial assistance with the salary and related expenses of full-time professional recreation leadership;
(b) provision of staff consultation to determine professional development needs for municipal recreation personnel;
(c) identification and communication of professional development opportunities for municipal recreation personnel;
(d) provision of financial assistance to meet identified professional development needs of municipal recreation personnel;
(e) provision of direct programs to meet professional development needs;
(f) provision of increased financial assistance to employ recreation students seasonally or on a year round basis;
(g) provision of financial assistance for short term employment of individuals with technical or special skills;
(h) provision of consultation with municipalities re role of recreation staff.

OBJECTIVE NO. 4 — COMMUNICATIONS

To ensure that municipal recreation authorities are aware of the role of the Department, including available programs and services and that the Department is aware of municipal concerns and initiatives.

Methods

(a) development and distribution of a publication outlining programs and services from the Department;
(b) initiation of regular municipal, regional and provincial meetings between municipal recreation authorities and the Minister and various levels of Department staff that will allow for the free exchange of ideas and information on municipal recreation;
(c) development of an audio-visual presentation highlighting Department programs and services and methods of access;
(d) development of an ongoing process to provide local evaluation of Department programs and services;
(e) provision of staff consultants for identification of assistance programs.

OBJECTIVE NO. 5 — FACILITY CONSTRUCTION

To assist municipalities and organizations with the planning and construction of recreation facilities.

Methods

(a) provision of staff consultation in determining the need for new facility construction and/or identification of assistance programs;
(b) provision of financial assistance to acquire professional consultants;
(c) provision of cost-sharing for the construction of new recreation facilities and the renovations to existing facilities with priority given to projects involving municipal cooperation;
(d) identification, research and communication of new and innovative trends in design and construction;
(e) provision of incentives for experimental facility design and construction;
(f) publication and distribution of a reference series for facility development;
(g) establishment of criteria for the development of new facilities adequate to serve an area in an economic and efficient manner through a provincial inventory and other guidelines;
(h) provision of financial resources and/or policies to encourage cost-sharing of facilities by user municipalities;
(i) continuation of liaison with Union of N.S. Municipalities to encourage its help in promoting sharing of capital costs of facility construction.

OBJECTIVE NO. 6 — FACILITY OPERATION

To assist municipalities with the operation of recreation facilities.

Methods

(a) provision of assistance to municipalities to assess the efficiency of their facility operations;
(b) provision of resources to assist with more efficient operation of recreation facilities;
(c) provision of staff consultation re operational needs and available assistance programs;

(d) identification, research and communication of new and innovative trends in facility operation;
(e) provision of incentives for experimental operation systems and techniques;
(f) publication and distribution of a reference guide to facility maintenance and operation;
(g) provision of financial resources and/or policies to encourage cost-sharing of facility operations by user municipalities;
(h) request support of Union of N.S. Municipalities in promotion of shared operations of facilities by user municipalities.

OBJECTIVE NO. 7 — SUPPORT OF AGENCIES

To provide resources to agencies that are of support to municipal recreation and volunteers, eg. Recreation Association of Nova Scotia, Recreation Council for the Disabled, Sport Nova Scotia, Provincial Volunteer Week Committee etc.

Methods

(a) provision of financial assistance for leadership and expansion of programs and services;
(b) appointment of Department staff liaison.

OBJECTIVE NO. 8 — INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

To promote financial and physical support for recreation by all other agencies and Departments of provincial and federal governments.

Methods

(a) encouragement of governments to include recreation programs and facilities for consideration in "make-work" programs;
(b) encouragement of the Department of Education, Nova Scotia School Boards Association, the Union of N.S. Municipalities and its member units to share school facilities with municipal recreation commissions and committees;
(c) encouragement of departments such as Fisheries, Tourism, Health, Environment, Lands and Forests to include recreation facilities and programs in their planning.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Co-ordinator of Municipal
and Special Recreation Services
~~25~~ 15 Prince Street
Truro, Nova Scotia
B2N ~~1E6~~ 1G1

Phone: ~~895-7849~~ 893-5750

Regional Representative — Cape Breton (Sydney)
Provincial Building
Prince Street
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 5L1

Phone: ~~564-8184~~ 563-2380

Regional Assistant — Cape Breton (Port Hawkesbury)
Post Office Box 989
Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia
B0E 2V0

Phone: 625-1024

Regional Representative — Highland
274 Main Street
Antigonish, Nova Scotia
B2G 2C4

Phone: 863-1736

Regional Representative — Fundy
~~25~~ 15 Prince Street
Truro, Nova Scotia
B2N ~~1E6~~ 1G1

Phone: 893-9487

Regional Representative — Central
Post Office Box 864
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2V2

Phone: 424-7622

Regional Representative — Valley
Post Office Box 2140
Windsor, Nova Scotia
B0N 2T0

Phone: 798-~~4816~~
5794

Regional Representative — South Shore
Post Office Box 470
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
B4V 2X6

Phone: 543-5000